GRAAT On-Line issue #14 June 2013

Richard Brome and the Middle Temple: the triumph of justice?

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Law and justice are important issues pervading the whole *corpus* of Richard Brome, whose plays are peopled by Justices of the Peace, lawyers, students of law, law officers, constables, but also members of the Rabble, thieves and debtors. Eleven out of sixteen plays (chart 1) contain characters belonging to or with connections to the world of law, and numerous works reveal a specific concern with judicial issues.

Studies on law and literature[1] in early modern England have underlined the dramatist's profound interest in legal problems. Carpi points out that drama "frequently presents figures of lawyers—generally seen as villains—and explores issues concerning inheritances, contracts and their validity, marriages and property, and relationships between children and fathers".[2] Drama actually responds to the need to "conceptualise and symbolise the experience of law, justice and injustice", as Mukherji in *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* affirms.[3] While most critics, like Hutson (2007) and Wilson (2000)[4] have concentrated on Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, less space has been devoted to the Caroline theatre and Richard Brome, one of the most significant dramatists of the period. Only Butler, Steggle and Cave have discussed some aspects connected to the legal sphere in Brome's plays and, in doing so, they suggest the valuable contribution that an investigation of his plays could provide to the studies in law and literature.

As a matter of fact, his *corpus* is a turning point in this field. On the one hand, Brome's perspective is peculiar and surprisingly interesting: this differs from

the better known points of view belonging to Shakespeare and Jonson, and this is probably due to Brome's particular perception of society and the historical period he lived in. On the other hand, the dramatist clearly manifests the awareness of the weakness of the contemporary legal system but, far from being the product of the society of the time or a mere observer of its dynamics, his drama is an active part of the historical process, one of the agents of change that contributed to the transformation of the Caroline society. His plays provide a sensitive and articulate response to the main needs and anxieties concerning law and justice. The insistence on the theme throughout Brome's dramatic production reflects the relevance of these issues during the Caroline period,[5] an age marked by Royal Proclamations, laws and edicts, but which lacked an authority to ensure they were respected.

The legal system is the real nerve centre o*f The Demoiselle* (1638) an*d A Mad Couple Well Matched* (1639). In these plays Brome develops the much-discussed issue of justice in the place where laws should be enforced, the Temple Walks of the Middle Temple, one of the Inns of Court, thus revealing the many contradictions of the 17th-century legal system in an ironic, sharp and subversive way. The Temple Walks stand out as the place of justice, a no man's land for illicit dealings, a space where honesty and dishonesty coexist, where one can assert one's rights but also avoid discharging one's duties.

On the one hand, in *The Demoiselle* the characters go to the Temple Walks in order to seek justice, yet do not find it, despite the numerous representatives of the legal world in the play. On the other hand, in *A Mad Couple Well Matched* the same space is not the place where one can find justice, since each character enforces his or her personal laws according to his or her own objectives, without scruples about trampling on moral and ethical values or feelings.

The aim of this study is to concentrate on the realistic setting of the plays, which is used as a vehicle for Brome's sharp criticism towards the English legal system since the place "represents the law, but it is inhabited by outlaws", as Steggle points out.[6] The article focuses on how the concept of law is developed and satirized throughout the plays and how the stories suggest the multiple facets of justice.

Finally, this study clarifies the concept of law not only as connected to legal justice but also to a code of behaviour, concerning both morality and etiquette.

1. The Demoiselle: "the world is turned quite upside down" (3.2.596)

The Demoiselle (1638) seems to have been one of the last plays written by Brome for the Salisbury Court playhouse, then occupied by Queen Henrietta Maria's Men. In the light of this detail, the choice of setting acquires a more symbolic meaning since the theatre was at the border of Alsazia, near the Temple Walks. Therefore, the author puts on stage locations that the audience would see on leaving the theatre at the end of the play.[7] In this way, he is able to increase the involvement of the spectators and their sense of identification with the characters in the story as well as paying literary homage to the theatre where he had worked for so many years.

The plot of the comedy is quite intricate: the story revolves around four families and develops over two generations: the Vermins, the Bumpseys, the Drygrounds and the Brookalls. One of the main characters is the usurer Vermin, the villain, who, after lending money to Dryground and Brookall, is involved in their ruin. Three parallel subplots are connected respectively to these three characters: firstly, Vermin has to cope with the escape of his daughter Alice, unwilling to marry the knight chosen by her father. Secondly, Dryground tries to raise money and, in disguise, opens a "*new ordinary*" (the one of the subtitle of the play). He is assisted by Wat, the usurer's son, and Frank, Brookall's son, who is disguised as Frances ("the demoiselle" of the title). Finally, Brookall haunts the Temple Walks complaining about his misfortune with a mysterious beggar called Phyllis.

The scenes of the play are set in different milieus, from the domestic locations in Act I (Vermin's and Bumpsey's house) passing through the Temple Walks (Acts II and IV) to the fictitious ordinary in Acts III and V (chart 2).

Interestingly, in spite of the subtitle, *the New Ordinary*, the Temple Walks are the dominant milieu: not only for the emphasis it is given throughout the play, but also for its implications in the plot since it reinforces the idea of a world "turned

upside down", a universe in which everything concerning the law is the reverse of what should be.

I will now explore how the location is first introduced and later put on stage in the play, how the different characters interact with the urban space and how the theme of law is addressed through the vehicle of the setting and the people who go there. Let us first look at Act I, set in domestic locations but relevant in terms of space, law and justice.

1.1 *The Demoiselle*: Act I

In the opening scene of Act I, the usurer Vermin and the impoverished knight Dryground discuss Brookall's financial hardship:

> Dryground: No, sir, my project is in the behalf
> Of the poor gentleman you overthrew
> By the strong hand of law, bribes, and oppression:
> Brookall—do you know him, sir?
> Vermin: Oh ho! I now remember; you have reason!
> That Brookall had a sister, whom you vitiated
> In your wild heat of blood, and then denied
> Her promised marriage, turned her off with child
> A dozen years since, and since that never heard of.
> Ha! Is't not so? Pray, did you know her, sir?
> Dryground: I wish I could redeem that ruthful fault
> By all expiatory means. (1.1.22, 25-6)

In the extract, the law is described as a sort of enemy, a character whose "strong hand" assists Vermin to overthrow Brookall and is associated with bribes and oppression, thus marking the negative connotation of the law. Yet, the usurer promptly reminds Dryground of his lack of morality and of the important role he played in Brookall's ruin when he got his sister pregnant and then abandoned her.

This issue turns up again through the reference to Brookall's son, Frank, an aspiring student of law. A strong contradiction emerges in their dialogue: while

Brookall's son is a law student, the usurer's son, Wat, is an outlaw. Moreover, the choice of this name grows more meaningful in the light of the well-known historic event dating back to Richard II's reign, the Peasants' revolt in 1381, whose leader was Wat Tyler. As Walter Thornbury claims, one of the main targets of the revolt was the legal system, represented by the lawyers:

> In Wat Tyler's rebellion the wild men of Kent poured down on the dens of the Temple lawyers, pulled down their houses, carried off the books, deeds, and rolls of remembrance, and burnt them in Fleet Street, to spite the Knights Hospitallers. Walsingham, the chronicler, indeed, says that the rebels—who, by the by, claimed only their rights—had resolved to decapitate all the lawyers of London, to put an end to all the laws that had oppressed them, and to clear the ground for better times.[8]

Dryground is helped by both Frank and Wat in his plan so that paradoxically he is assisted by the interaction between legality and illegality, two very different sides of the law.

In the following scene, at the house of the old Justice Bumpsey, Brome turns to another family group where once again the importance of law is stressed. The old Justice discovers that his daughter Jane has just married Dryground's son Valentine without his permission. In Bumpsey's words, lawfulness stands out as his dominant value through the repetition of expressions connected to the law such as "lawful" (127) and "no law exacts it sooner" (129) which stand in sharp contrast to his daughter's marriage which took place without his consent. Bumpsey shows his aversion towards the marriage marking the difference between himself and Dryground in the areas of social status and economic condition: "You are a knight and a man of worship [...] I am a plain fellow, and out of debt" (1.2.107, 109) but mainly in terms of the context in which this is happening: "you live confined in Milford Lane or Fuller Rents, or who knows where, it skills not" (1.2.124).

The two spatial references are once again highly relevant: Milford Lane was a street running off the Strand to the south towards the Thames, to the west of London, known as a notorious hiding place for debtors. Fuller Rents, instead, was a court "opposite the end of Chancery Lane, leading from Holborn into Gray's Inn Walks" and a sanctuary for debtors and fugitives.[9] In 1604, upon the joint petition of members of the House residing in Fuller's Rents, a new and strong door was allowed to be placed there, to be opened only during term time and to be kept locked by a porter. If any further annoyance should arise, it was to "remain dammed up for ever".[10]

Now it is worth sketching the history of the Temple Walks to recognize the dichotomous essence of this location as well as its impact on the dynamics of the plot.

1.2. The Temple Walks onstage

The Temple Walks were the grounds of the Inner and Middle Temple, and were situated between Fleet Street and the Thames. The name derives from the order of the Knights Templar, who had established their headquarters in this area before the 12th century. From the 14th century onwards the place was assigned to lawyers so making the place a haunt both for lawyers and students of law. Moreover, in 1580 the local inhabitants received exemption from the jurisdiction of the City and the possibility to protect debtors from arrest. As a consequence, the place attracted rogues and outlaws, becoming the hotbed of crime which concentrated in a part of the area called Alsazia (after Alsace, the long disputed province between France and Germany). The location, according to John Strype writing in 1720, was "greatly grieved and exceedingly disquieted by many beggars, vagabonds, and sundry idle and lewd persons who daily pass out of all parts of the City" (III: 202). Therefore, the image of the place which emerges is highly contradictory, a fascinating mixture of justice and crime.

Throughout the centuries, the milieu of the Temple Walks attracted the attention of many writers including Brome who used it as a setting for their works. Actually, the location was so wide and variegated that dramatists were able to

exploit its multiple spots each offering different starting points for their plots. Among them, Lording Barry in *Ram Alley*, Aphra Behn in *Lucky Chance*, Shadwell in *The Squire of Alsazia* and Walter Scott in *Fortunes of Nigel*, but also Shakespeare who set one of the scenes of his *Henry VI* in a specific spot of the Temple Walks, the famous and celebrated Temple Gardens.

In his *Theatre and Crisis* Butler is the first scholar to focus on the Temple Walks as setting, a location which offers "a gallery of social types, […] an anatomy of the world, […] an exposure of a society bound together by law not love".[11] Steggle, building on Butler's reading, focuses on the setting in terms of politics, investigating the connections between the Temple Walks and contemporary England: "*The Demoiselle* presents not a single system of law and justice but a number of interlocking and indeed competing ones. […] in the process, though, the play has asked a number of difficult questions about the mechanisms not just of usury but also of law and justice in Charles's England".[12]

Therefore, this setting is rich in resonances and social and political implications, which perfectly contributes to emphasizing the strong presence of the law in London life but at the same time its ineffectiveness.

Let us now consider the way this location is represented in Acts II and IV and evaluate the actual impact on the dynamics of the play and on the relationships among the characters. In the chart (chart 3), the characters are placed in decreasing order according to the length of time they spend on stage. This marks the contradictions of the location since the old Justice Bumpsey, a symbol of law and justice, is present only in one scene, while the beggar Phyllis, who is the only woman, and the impoverished gentleman are prominent in three scenes. On the other hand, Valentine,[13] who lawfully contributes to the reunion of his father and his lost daughter Phyllis, is often in the Temple Walks scenes, whereas Wat, the reckless son of the usurer, is in the location only once and he is also threatened with being thrown into the Thames.

Act II, containing a long scene set in the Temple Walks, impacts heavily on the development of the story presenting a number of strands involving Valentine (the opening of the ordinary) Vermin (his daughter's disappearance), Brookall (his

reverse of fortune) and Phyllis (her life as a beggar), which contributes to showing the disparity of the law.

At the beginning of Act II, Dryground's son Valentine and his friends Ambrose and Oliver, standing in the Temple Walks, discuss the opening of a new ordinary run by a man called Osbright, actually Dryground in disguise, and his daughter. The name of the character might ring as a synonym for sexually disreputable behaviour due to its connections with the story of Osbright, the King of the West Saxons, who raped the wife of one of his nobles, and died while fighting against invaders.[14] Once again the name provides the character with a precise connotation which is consistent with the idea of the ordinary as a brothel (as was usual for eating and drinking establishments) but contrasts with the idea of legality connected to the setting in the Temple Walks.

> They call him Osbright.
> A brave old blade: he was the president
> Of the can-quarrelling fraternity,
> Now called the roaring brotherhood, thirty years since. (2.1.199)

These lines recall *The Weeding of Covent Garden,* another play by Brome in which tavern life, laws, prostitution and a Brotherhood are given great emphasis. As in that play, here recurs the phrase "roaring brotherhood" and the reference to the "blade" identifies the group as the "fraternity of the Baton and the Blade" (*CG*, 1.2.145). These multiple affinities are more significant if we remember that *The Weeding of Covent Garden*, like *The Demoiselle*, is "full of law of all varieties, but order and authority there is none; and this is the lamentable state of England under Charles's personal rule".[15] Yet, in this case the criticism is sharper since the lack of law and authority is to be found at the core of the legal world.

The second plot strand is represented by Vermin's search for Alice: the usurer, like Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, has been deceived by his daughter who has escaped:

> Oliver: What makes he here, trow, in the Temple Walks? [...]
> Vermin: Go back to the *recorder's*; fetch the *warrant.*

I'll search the city and the suburbs for her. [...]
Cannot this place, where *law* is chiefly studied,
Relieve[16] me with so much as may revenge
Me on these scorners? (2.1.218, 224, 242)

His thirst for revenge leads him, his servant and his would-be son in law, Sir Amphilus, first to the Temple Walks, where law is principally studied: as the verb "relieve" suggests, he asks this place for relief, in particular, legal relief (OED v., 1d). His search for his daughter Alice has definite spatial coordinates: it is not limited to the city, which is the commercial part of London provided with its own system of government and justice, but extends to the suburbs, outside the city walls. Vermin's words are full of references to the world of law and to the places and the people involved in the administration of justice such as the recorder's and the warrant: the former was the office of the recorder, that is a judge responsible for a city or borough.[17] Therefore, the usurer invokes the intervention of the law and specifies that the "strong hand of the law" that has helped him to overthrow Dryground and Brookall does not assist him in his search of his daughter.

In the meantime, Vermin meets Brookall who blames the usurer for his misfortune. He sees himself as a victim of usury and law and he underscores his disappointment with the inequalities of the legal system, unable to support innocent people like him:

That law, once called sacred, and ordained
For safety and relief to innocence,
Should live to be accursed in her succession,
And now be styled supportress of oppression,
Ruin of families, past the bloody rage
Of rape or murder, all the crying sins
Negotiating for hell in her wild practice. [...]
The law? Ha, ha, ha! Talk not to me of law; law's not my friend.
Law is [...] fatal to me [...] I have enough of law. (2.1.352, 405)

Actually, in the whole play there is a particular insistence on the semantic field of the word "law" (in nouns such as "lawyer" or adjectives like "lawful") which is repeated thirty-six times and twenty in this act alone, marking the importance of this issue.

The last strand of the plot concerns somebody who knows Temple Walks very well, the beggar Phyllis, an illegitimate daughter of a knight and a gentlewoman. The Temple Walks are the only place in London where it is lawful to beg:

> Aye, when I beg i' th' streets.
> I have allowance here, as well as any
> Brokers, projectors, common bail, or bankrupts,
> Panders, and cheaters of all sorts, that mix here
> 'Mongst men of honour, worship, lands and money.
> [As PHYLLIS speaks] *lawyers and others pass over the stage as conferring two by two*. (2.1. 339)

As Butler remarks, "the Walks are […] a displaying of professions" and "usury and Law here share the stage with their unacknowledged allies, Beggary and Ruin".[18] Actually, Phyllis, in the role of a "choric commentator",[19] lists agents, business ventures, bails, namely someone who procures the release of another person from custody or prison by giving security, insolvent traders or merchants, go-betweens, dishonest gamblers.

Brome puts on stage different exponents of the legal world, such as lawyers, an attorney and the Templer Friendly; moreover, as an early example, the playwright dramatises a common legal practice of his day which consisted in asking poor people to serve as witnesses for a fee. In this case an attorney[20] asks Brookall to perjure himself for two shillings. Upon the latter's refusal, the attorney turns away in search of other perjurers, thus proving the frequency of this practice.

> Enter ATTORNEY.
> Attorney: Will you make an oath, sir?
> Brookall: An oath? for what?

Attorney: For two shillings. And it be half a crown, my client shall not stand w' ye; the judge is at leisure, and the other of our bail is there already. Come, go along.
Brookall: I guess you some attorney. Do you know me?
Attorney: No, nor any man we employ in these cases.
(2.1.353-356)

Secondly, another character from the legal world is Friendly, a member of the Temple who has been asked to search for Frank, Brookall's son:

Brookall: I desired you
To seek my son. [...]
Where is he? Have you found him?
Friendly: No, not him.
But I have found what may be comfort to you,
If you receive it like a man of courage. [...]
Indeed he is not dead, but lives— (2.1.362-3, 69)

Brookall believes his son to be dead, not knowing that he is actually disguised as the famous demoiselle all London is talking about. Finally, Brome stages the appearance of lawyers and others who pass over the stage while conferring two by two.

Act IV is still set in the Temple Walks but Brome invites us to visit a different spot of the location, the Thames flowing nearby. The scene opens with Wat who is dragged on by a "rabble of rude fellows" who are threatening to throw him into the Thames because they believe he is a pander. He is only able to escape thanks to Valentine and Oliver's intervention:

Wat: You rogues, slaves, villains, will you murther me?
Rabble: To the pump with him! To the pump, to the pump!
Valentine: Prithee, beat off the curs.
Rabble: No, to the Thames, the Thames! [...]

> Oliver: Pray gentlemen, forbear. It is thought fit, upon request made by a noble friend, favouring his person, not his quality, that for this time the pander be dismissed. So all depart in peace. (4.1. 654-657, 659)

Two aspects stand out in the above quotation: on the one hand, the episode contrasts with the supposed legality of the location and emphasises the underclass of London represented by the beggar Phyllis and the Rabble. The beggar offers a radically different point of view which marks her distance from the Rabble and her detachment from the dynamics of the setting. Phyllis is the only person who shows real pity for Wat (even though they have never met before) and seems to ask for divine justice more than the human kind, when comparing Wat's immersion to a Christian baptism.

Moreover, the episode contains a strong realistic connotation since Brome references an event that actually happened in 1618, when ruffians in the Temple Walks threw a bailiff into the Thames as he was attempting to make an arrest.[21] This event must have caused an uproar since a similar episode is also evoked in *The Squire of Alsazia* by Shadwell fifty years after *The Demoiselle*.

As in Act II, Brome exploits again the device of the lawyers passing over the stage but this time he uses them to emphasize the disproportion perceived by Brookall between himself and the law, which implacably stripped him of his status and money:

> Brookall: These walks afford to miserable man
> Undone by suits leave yet to sit, or go,
> Though in a ragged one, and look upon
> [As BROOKALL speaks,] *lawyers and others pass over the stage.*
> The giants that overthrew him, though they strut
> And are swol'n bigger by his emptiness. (4.1.692)

In a sort of nightmarish vision, Brookall sees the lawyers as giants who have plotted to overthrow him and gained financially from his ruin. Brome expresses the

same concept through the powerful image of the character as victim of the "gulf of law" which swallows up everything and everyone, even members of the legal world:

> What corrupt lawyer or usurious citizen,
> Oppressing landlord or unrighteous judge,
> But leaves the world with horror? And their wealth,
> (By rapine forced from the oppressèd poor)
> To heirs that (having turned their sires to th' devil)
> Turn idiots, lunatics, prodigals or strumpets?
> All wanting either wit, or will, to save
> Their fatal portions from the gulf of law,
> Pride, riot, surfeits, dice and luxury,
> Till beggary, or diseases turns them after? (4.1.724)

A real and well-known location like the Temple Walks contrasts with the fictitious new ordinary set in an unspecified part of London, yet presumably near Temple Walks. Interestingly, this is the place where all contrasts are solved, harmony is restored and justice is done, whereas the Temple Walks stand as the symbol of a law which is no longer able to perform its duty and guide the country.

1.3 The world of the ordinary on stage (III, 1; V, 1)

Act III, 1 and Act V, 1 are both set within the new ordinary run by Dryground in disguise. The location seems to evoke the world of law from a different perspective since it is frequented by the same categories of people as the Temple Walks. What Wat says about the clients of the ordinary is highly significant:

> All must be nameless. There are lords among 'em.
> And some of civil coat, that love to draw
> New stakes at the old game as well as they;
> Truckle-breeched justices, and bustling lawyers
> That thrust in with their motions; muffled citizens;
> Old money-masters some that seek the purchase;
> And merchant venturers that bid for the

Foreign commodity as fair as any. (3.1.550)

Among them, there are many exponents of the legal world such as Justices and lawyers, but also citizens, merchants and money-lenders. Actually the dimension of law seems to invade this milieu, even though, since the location is nothing less than a bawdy-house, the law was supposed to oppose its activities instead of taking part.

Within this setting, the idea of law is replaced by the code of etiquette when Bumpsey's daughter and wife go to the ordinary eager to learn the appropriate behaviour for the royal court; this gives Brome the opportunity to make fun of current French-influenced fashions since Frances, "a rare creature come to town, of a French breed, a demoiselle, that professeth teaching of court-carriage and behaviour" (3.2.577), pretends to be teaching them how to make a curtsy, "all de ways to win his love" (898), how to get dressed, to behave and speak.

This episode is interrupted by the sudden arrival of two sergeants who are there to arrest Wat. Therefore, the law now seems to invade the ordinary to bring order, yet the law officers' actions turn out to be far from being lawful: actually, they do not arrest Wat when Valentine offers to pay them:

> Sergeants: We arrest you, sir. Nay, we shall rule you. [...]
> Wat: Ha, ha, ha! Why, this is well, and very hospitably done.
> Sergeants: Will you walk, sir?
> Valentine: Sergeants, you shall not
> Out of the house. Here's for half an hour's attendance.
> [*Gives them money*.]
> Go into that room with your prisoner.
> You shall have wine and smoke too. (5.1.951-952, 955, 967)

The play ends with the triumph of the law in an ironic and metaphorical way. On the one hand, the final image of the law is the one of the sergeants corrupted by a bribe, as at the end of *The Weeding of Covent Garden*. On the other hand, after the three intermarriages taking place during the play (Wat and Phyllis, Frank and Alice,

Dryground and Eleanor), most of the characters have new family ties so that the stage is crowded with fathers, brothers, sisters, and mothers-in-law thus showing that the "strong hand" of the law dominates the universe of *The Demoiselle*.

2 *The lawless universe of* A Mad Couple Well Matched

Unusually for him, Brome stages the same location, the Temple Walks, in another play after *The Demoiselle*, but focusing on a specific area, the notorious Ram Alley, which turns out to be the most suitable spot of the location to stage his most controversial and subversive comedy, *A Mad Couple Well Matched*. The protagonist is George Careless, an unscrupulous young man who lives in Ram Alley with his servant Wat[22] at the expense of his rich uncle Sir Oliver Thrivewell. This is also the place where he used to meet his lover Phoebe whom he bedded and later rejected after an empty promise of marriage. Once abandoned, the girl asks a relative, a London merchant called Tom Saleware, for help.

This location allows the playwright to develop further the issue of law and justice, enriching it with a strong moral connotation. Ram Alley, connecting Fleet Street and King's Bench Walk, was a disreputable street in the Temple Walks, a famous site of prostitution and a kind of privileged place for debtors: actually, the location was a well-known sanctuary for all kinds of criminals such as thieves, murderers and debtors and for doubtful characters. When crime increased, an act passed by William III in 1697, known as "The Escape from Prison Act", abolished all London sanctuaries (Strype 1720 iii: 277) and the abolition was completed in 1723 under George I.

Now Ram Alley has vanished and the place is known as Hare Place. Still Ram Alley gained long lasting fame due to the references in numerous plays like Jonson's *The Staple of News* (1625), Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625) and Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* (1611). Therefore, when Brome uses this location, he also alludes to these other plays which, being familiar to the audience, increase the comedy.

As emerges from the chart (chart 4) there are only indoor scenes in this play: Careless' hovel in Ram Alley, Lord and Lady Thrivewell's house, the Saleware's shop in or near Cheapside, Mistress Crostill's house, and Lord Lovely's house. On the one

hand, the indoor locations reflect the private dimension of law and justice in this play: actually the strands of the plot are personal problems that the characters try to keep secret and locations like these may suggest the idea of secrecy. On the other hand, the only location that we can collocate with some certainty apart from Ram Alley is Saleware's shop, in or near Cheapside. Act II, scene 1 opens with a clear spatial reference.

> Alicia: All Cheapside and Lombard Street, madam, could not have furnished you with a more complete bargain. You will find it in the wearing, and thank me both for the goodness of the stuff and of the manufacture. (2.2.194)

The commercial setting, which should put an emphasis on the idea of trade of goods, actually seems to imply the sex trade where Alicia, Saleware's wife, plays an important role. This is part of a subtext hinting at prostitution which pervades the whole play and that contributes to evoking a sort of Ram Alley in any location staged. Actually, each location seems to reflect Ram Alley since they are frequented by similar categories of people: cheaters like Bellamy (in disguise as a man), the adulterer Thrivewell, debtors like Careless, prostitutes like Alicia, to give just a few examples. Moreover, Ram Alley appears to be a central part of the life of many characters, beside Careless who lives there. As Shaw remarks, Ram Alley "is where Careless has enjoyed his whore (and where Wat, incidentally, has also enjoyed her), and it is where he returns from his uncle's house for his excesses of "wine, roaring, whoring." The area is also where Alicia Saleware has cuckolded her husband and her nickname, "Ally," actually recalls Ram Alley.[23]

The location is mentioned twice throughout the play, in both cases by Careless while in conversation with his servant Wat. The opening scene is in Ram Alley and introduces the main activities of the protagonist Careless: gambling, whoring and other lewd pastimes:

> I cannot, nor will I trouble my brains to think of any. I will rather die here in Ram Alley or walk down to the Temple and

> lay myself down alive in the old Synagogue, cross-legged among the monumental knights there till I turn marble with 'em. Think, quotha! What should I think on? (1.1. 145)

Besides reinforcing the sense of place, Careless's use of the adverb 'here' seems to remind the audience that Ram Alley was not far from the Salisbury Court Theatre, for which the play was originally written, thus adding realism since the spectators feel they are actually in Ram Alley as part of the performance. In the dialogue it emerges why Careless has to live in Ram Alley:

> Wat: Then would he ha' told me again what all your courses have been: namely, running into debt by all the ways can be imagined, and cheating by all could be invented, then that the said thing (as you call it) your uncle, before he cast you quite off, had redeemed you out of prison and several holds within the space of fifteen months, fourteen times.
> Careless: That was not once a month then, or if it had, what had that been to him? 'Twas I that suffer'd, thou shouldst ha' told him, not he. (1.1.7-8)

Later in the scene, while thinking of a new way of raising money, Wat lists some previous methods he has used and then proposes something which could be successful in the milieu of Ram Alley, setting up a male brothel, so implying that the setting inspires only immoral or criminal projects.

The idea of public law is embodied by Saleware, a London merchant relative to Phoebe, who tries to convince Careless to marry her, also with the threat of denouncing him:

> Saleware: [...] I must tell you to tell your master from me, and as I would tell him myself if he were here personally present, he is a most dishonest gentleman if he do her not lawful right by marrying her; and that right I came to demand, and obtain of him, or to denounce the law against him.

> Wat: How happy are you that you came short to tell him so, else he would ha' so beaten you, as never was citizen beaten since the great battle of Finsbury Field.
> Saleware: Your great words cannot make me fear his blows (I am not dashed nor bashed), nor cross him out of my book for fear of any such payment. I have him there for four score pound, as you know, though you are pleased to forget me. But *Sapientia mea mihi, stultitia tua tibi*. (1.1.113-117, 125).

This dialogue is particularly interesting for the idea of law it provides. The word "law" and its adjective are used in Act I six times,[24] and Saleware mentions it three times only in this passage. In particular, "law to be found for money" seems to convey the idea that justice is necessary only for personal aims, not for a moral purpose. Moreover, the Latin sentence repeated many times throughout the play in order to turn it into an ironic *leitmotiv*, "*Sapientia mihi, stultitia tibi*", evokes the serious language of the law while mocking its lack of content.

Then Ram Alley is mentioned once again in Act II, when Careless is invited to live at his uncle's house and remember Ram Alley without nostalgia since he does not need to live in the place anymore:

> I need no more ensconcing now in Ram Alley, nor the sanctuary of Whitefriars, the forts of Fuller's Rents and Milford Lane. My debts are paid, and here's a stock remaining of gold, pure gold; hark how sweetly it chinks. (2.2.337)

Yet, Careless does not forget the place where he has spent most of his life, but evokes it in all its locations: Whitefriars, Fuller's Rents and Milford Lane, already mentioned in *The Demoiselle*. In the two scenes we can see that the relationship between Careless and Ram Alley cannot be identified as *topophilia*[25], since the character is obliged to live there owing to his debts so that he is glad to leave that location at the end of the play. By leaving Ram Alley the gallant aims at forgetting a part of his past life and start afresh in a different place, where he is not known as a

debtor and a cheater. However this does not imply his redemption. We do not know whether Careless will ever come back to Ram Alley, yet the location has become part of him so that, just as in a symbiotic relation, it will always follow him wherever he goes.

3 Conclusions

The two plays I have explored show the different sides of justice in the Caroline period: if in *The Demoiselle* Brome stages the coexistence of law and crime, in *A Mad Couple Well Matched* he points to the lack of a central moral, political or judicial authority, a situation that England was experiencing in those decades. Each location of the play turns out to be a kind of tribunal where the characters are at the same time accused and act as their own lawyers. A good example is Lady Thrivewell in *A Mad Couple Well Matched* who asks spectators for mercy for what she has done: "May ladies that shall hear this story told, Judge mildly of my act since he's so bold" (4.2.816). Therefore, the only real judge of the play seems to be the audience, who are treated as if they were the only reliable and honest people in a lawless world.

Legal issues are also discussed in plays like *The City Wit*, a comedy where the Royal Court protocols are dramatised within the context of the Presence Chamber at Whitehall, thus showing that something is rotten at the core of the legal system since the only rules actually applied are those concerning etiquette. Instead in *The Weeding of Covent Garden* and in *The Sparagus Garden*, the playwright deals with Royal Proclamations that seek to limit the bills in eating establishments, like taverns and pleasure gardens, where these laws are supposed to be applied. But it is in *The Antipodes*, at the end of his career, that Brome provides one of the best examples of dramatisation of the legal issue, also through the powerful metaphor of the law as a flowing river that only cunning men manage to cross: "The law's the river, is't? Yes, 'tis a river / Through which great men, and cunning, wade or swim; /But mean and ignorant must drown" (4.1.751).

As has clearly emerged from my investigation, Brome's plays offer numerous issues to be discussed in the field of law and literature for multiple reasons: not only for his accuracy in the use of legal language and knowledge of legal theory, but also

for his open criticism towards the law and its main representatives through the powerful medium of the theatre. As in the case of the two plays I have explored, his shrewd satire is reinforced by the combination of legal issues and place realism, which leads one to question whether justice can ever triumph, at least in the Middle Temple.

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C h a r t 1

	Lawyer	Beggar	Law student	Constable	Justice of the Peace	Sergeant Officer	Rabble	Thief Outlaw
The Northern Lass (1629)	X			X	XX			
The Weeding of Covent Garden (1632)				X	X			
The Novella (1632)	X					X		
The Late Lancashire Witches (1634)				X		X	X	
The Queen's Exchange (1638)				X				X
The Sparagus Garden (1635)	X				X			
The English Moor (1637)					X			
The Demoiselle (1638)	X	X	X		X	X	X	
The Antipodes (1638)	X							X
The Court Beggar								X

(1640)								
A Mad Couple Well Matched (1640)								X
A Jovial Crew (1642)		X		X	X			

C h a r t 2

	Vermin's house	Bumpsey's house	Ordinary	The Temple Walks
I, 1	X			
I, 2		X		
II, 1				X
III, 1			X	
III, 2		X		
IV, 1				X
IV, 2				X
V,1			X	

C h a r t 3

Characters	II, 1	IV, 1	IV, 2
Valentine (Dryground's son)	X	X	X
Brookall (impoverished gentleman)	X	X	X
Phyllis (beggar)	X	X	X
Oliver (gallant)	X	X	
Ambrose (gallant)	X	X	
Amphilus (knight)	X	X	
Vermin (usurer)	X	X	
Trebasco (Amphilus's footman)	X		
Wat (Vermin's son)		X	
Bumpsey (Old Justice)		X	

C h a r t 4

	Thrivewell's House	Lord Lovely's House	Saleware's Shop	Mistress Crostill's house	Careless's house (Ram Alley)	Unknown Location

I, 1					X	
I, 2	X					
II, 1			X			
II, 2	X					
III, 1				X		
IV, 1				X		
IV, 2	X					
IV, 3						X
IV, 4	X					
V, 1		X				
V, 2	X					

NOTES

[1] As for the studies about law and literature, see Ian Ward, *Law and Literature: Possibilities and Perspectives,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995; Richard Weisberg, *Poetics and Other Strategies of Law and Literature,* New York: Columbia UP, 1992; Richard A. Posner, *Law and Literature, a misunderstood relation*, Cambridge, (Mass): Harvard UP, 1988, Patrick Hanafin, Adam Gearey, Joseph Brooker, *Law and Literature*, London: Blackwell, 2004.

[2] Daniela Carpi, "Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama by Subha Mukherji" in *Comparative Drama* 41. 2 (Summer 2007): 264-267 (264-5).

[3] Subha Mukherju, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama,* Cambridge: CUP, 2006: p. 2.

[4] Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*. New York: Oxford UP, 2007; Luke Andrew Wilson. *Theaters of Intention: Drama and the Law in Early Modern England*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000.

[5] As Cave notes: "the audience were experiencing King Charles's long period of personal rule, when in dispensing with Parliament he had removed one major regulator of the law, much of which he now shaped to meet his own requirements and his concept of justice as an expression of his political role as divinely appointed monarch" (2010: intro §30).

[6] Matthew Steggle, *Richard Brome: Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* Manchester: MUP Palgrave, 2004: p. 134.

[7] Steggle, p. 133.

[8] "The Temple: Church and precinct (part 1 of 3)," *Old and New London: Volume 1*, 1878, pp. 149-158. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45033.

[9] Edward H. Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists*, Manchester: UP, 1925: p. 211.

[10] Hugh Bellot, *The Inner and the Middle Temple: Legal, Literary, and Historic Associations*, London: Methuen, 1902: p. 202.

[11] Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642*, Cambridge: CUP, 1984: p. 213.

[12] Steggle, p. 136.

[13] Yet in a sense the character broke the law when he married Bumpsey's daughter without the consent of the old Justice.

[14] This story appears in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and in John Speed's *History of Great Britain*.

[15] Butler, p. 157.
[16] All the italics in the extract are mine.
[17] According to the OED (n.1, 10a), the latter is "a writ or order issued by some executive authority, empowering a ministerial officer to make an arrest, a seizure, or a search, to execute a judicial sentence, or to do other acts incident to the administration of justice."
[18] Butler, p. 231.
[19] Butler, p. 212.
[20] According to the *OED* (n. 1, 3) a lawyer "conducts litigation in the courts of Common Law and prepares the case for the barrister, or counsel, who argues the case in open court".
[21] See Walter George Bell (1912) *Fleet Street in Seven Centuries*, London: Paperback, 2009: pp. 291-2.
[22] Interestingly, besides the setting, the two plays have in common also the name of a character, Wat, which reinforces the connection between these works.
[23] Catherine M. Shaw, *Richard Brome,* Boston: Twayne, 1980: p. 88.
[24] The word law is not recurrent in the play since, after Act I is mentioned twice in Act III and Act IV, but not incisively.
[25] For the concept of "topophilia" see Yi-Fu Tuan *Topophilia*: *A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974.